

Fact Sheet

Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs and Planning to Promote Public Health

BACKGROUND

FHWA supports the planning and construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities as one way to promote public health. This Fact Sheet will provide an overview of the major transportation funding programs that can be used as mechanisms to provide communities with facilities for bicycling and walking. It will also provide information on the transportation planning process and the public involvement process and their impacts on transportation investments (see below).

OVERVIEW

One specific way in which the transportation community has been working to encourage means of transportation that promote physical activity and health is by funding facilities for bicycling and walking. As part of the transportation planning process, all of the major Federal surface transportation funding programs may be used to provide facilities for bicycling and walking. By law, for most of these funding programs (except for the Recreational Trails Program), the bicycle facility must be “principally for transportation use”. However, there is no special set-aside money for these facilities. In 1992, \$22.9 million dollars was spent on bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This rose to \$422.7 million in 2003. The decisions to spend Federal transportation dollars on particular projects are made not at the Federal level, but at State, metropolitan, and local levels in response to identified needs. All projects must be included in the planning process.

A role of the Federal government is the encouragement (but not mandate) of appropriate decision-making regarding funding priorities. In February 2000, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued “Design Guidance” language to its field offices encouraging the routine consideration of bicyclists and pedestrian needs when making transportation decisions. In essence, the guidance urged transportation agencies to make considering the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians the rule rather than the exception. A limited number of exceptional circumstances were also provided. This guidance has been adopted by policy makers in a number of States, such as California, Kentucky, Virginia, and Washington.

Providing facilities on which people can meet their transportation needs while being physically active must be accompanied by promotional efforts by the public health community. Encouraging routine physical activity such as bicycling and walking for all or some of an individual’s transportation tripmaking complements the provision of nonmotorized facilities. Thus, by working together, the transportation and public health communities can provide not only the facilities needed for bicycling and walking but also the encouragement that these facilities will be used.

For more information:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Information: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm

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Federal-aid Highway Funding Programs

BACKGROUND

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has many funding programs that can be used to promote public health and physical activity. Most funds are apportioned by formula to State Departments of Transportation, and the States or Metropolitan Planning Organizations solicit and select projects for funding.

OVERVIEW

Nearly all Federal-aid highway program funds may be used for projects that benefit pedestrians and bicyclists. These are the categories used most frequently, with FY 2003 amounts:

Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities (\$650 million): www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te. Provides funds to the States for projects that relate to surface transportation in 12 eligible categories. Categories that specifically benefit physical activity are pedestrian and bicycle facilities; pedestrian and bicyclist safety education and program; and rail-trails. \$650 million in FY 2003.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) (\$1.6 billion): www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cmaqps/index.htm. Provides funding for surface transportation and other related projects that contribute to air quality improvements and reduce congestion.

Federal Lands Highway Program (\$700 million): www.fhwa.dot.gov/flh. Provides funds to construct roads and trails within (or, in some cases, providing access to) Federal lands, through four categories: Indian Reservation Roads, Public Lands Highways, Park Roads and Parkways, and Refuge Roads. Funds available to the US Forest Service may be used for forest development roads and trails. Projects must be open to the public and part of an approved Federal land management agency general management plan.

National Scenic Byways Program (\$26.5 million): www.bywaysonline.org. Designates and supports America's BywaysTM, and provides funds for eligible scenic byways program activities. America's BywaysTM help get people out to recreational areas. This is a discretionary program: States submit applications to the US Department of Transportation. America's BywaysTM traveler information is available at www.byways.org.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) (\$50 million): www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails. Provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. Most States administer the RTP through a State resource agency.

For more information

FHWA has more background information in an article, *Federal Transportation Funds Benefit Recreation*, at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/fundrec.htm.

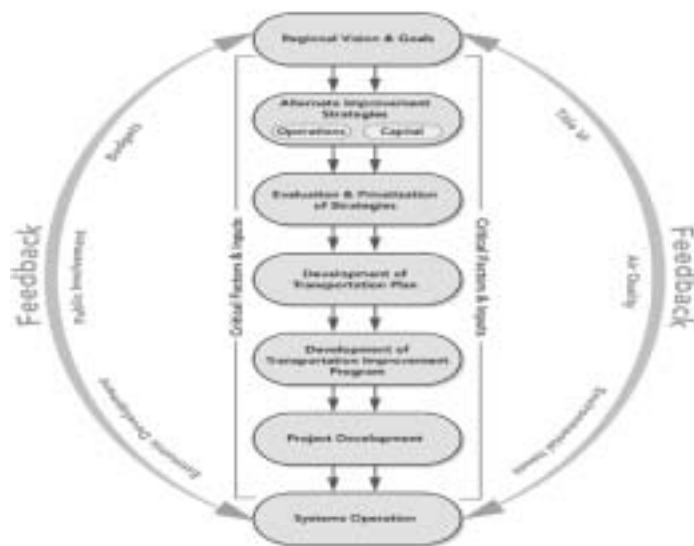
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The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process

Metropolitan Transportation planning is a collaborative process, led by the metropolitan planning organization (MPO).

The process is designed to foster involvement by all interested parties, such as the business community, community groups, environmental and other stakeholder organizations, government agencies, and the general public, through a proactive public participation process conducted by the MPO in coordination with the state department of transportation and transit operators. It is essential to extend public participation to include people who have been traditionally underserved by the transportation system and services in the region. Neglecting public involvement can result in unnecessary delays, litigation, and can erode public trust. Figure 1 illustrates the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Figure 1
Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process



The planning process includes a number of steps:

- Monitoring existing conditions;
- Forecasting future population and employment growth;
- Assessing projected land uses in the region and identifying major growth corridors;
- Identifying problems and needs and analyzing, through detailed planning studies, various transportation improvements;
- Developing alternative capital and operating strategies for people and goods;
- Estimating the impact of the transportation system on air quality within the region; and
- Developing a financial plan that covers operating costs, maintenance of the system, system preservation costs, and new capital investments.

Key Documents Produced by the Transportation Planning Process

There are three key documents produced by the transportation planning process. These documents are: 1) the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP); 2) the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) lists the transportation studies and tasks to be performed by the MPO staff or a member agency. Because the UPWP reflects local priorities, the content differs from one metropolitan area to another.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) or Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the statement of how the region plans to invest in the transportation system. The plan shall “include both long-range and short-range program strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods.” (23 CFR450C, Sec.450.322). MPOs should make special efforts to engage the public as well as interested parties in the development of the plan. In cases where a metropolitan area is designated as a nonattainment or maintenance area, the plan must conform to the State Implementation Program (SIP) for air quality.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a financially constrained three-year program covering the most immediate implementation priorities for transportation projects and strategies from the metropolitan transportation plan. It is the region’s way of allocating its limited transportation resources among the various capital and operating needs of the area, based on a clear set of short-term transportation priorities. Again, MPOs should make special efforts to engage the public as well as interested parties in the development of the TIP.

For more information visit the **Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program** website at www.planning.dot.gov.

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Transportation Decisionmaking and Public Involvement

BACKGROUND

Transportation affects almost every aspect of our lives. We use the transportation system each day, to go to work, to school, to visit family and friends, to shop, and to participate in recreational activities. Our extensive national transportation system of roads, bridges, sidewalks, bicycle paths, rail lines, airports, etc., is essential for our economy. Our transportation system is the network that connects our national and local economies and allows us to efficiently move people and goods from place to place.

OVERVIEW

The Basics Of Transportation Decisionmaking: Transportation planning exists to provide the process of identifying and solving transportation problems. Transportation planners look for ways to support citizens and decisionmakers to continually improve our Nation's transportation network. It involves examining the long-term goals of an area, studying its demographic characteristics and travel patterns, looking at how these interrelate, forecasting changes over multiple years, and evaluating available funding and alternatives for meeting current and future transportation needs to bring the area closer to achieving its vision. Throughout the transportation planning process, transportation planners must consider the effects of the transportation system on the environment, on the local economy, on community residents, and on numerous interrelated considerations, such as safety, community cohesion, economic development, traffic noise, and visual quality of the area.

The Role Of Public Involvement In Developing Transportation Policies, Programs And Projects: Public involvement is integral to the transportation mission. Without meaningful public participation, there is a risk of making less than optimal decisions. With it, it is possible to make a lasting contribution to an area's quality of life. But public involvement is more than an agency requirement and more than a means of fulfilling a statutory obligation. True public participation is central to good decisionmaking. The fundamental objective of public involvement programs is to ensure that the concerns and issues of everyone with a stake in transportation decisions are identified and addressed in the development of the policies, programs, and projects being proposed in their communities.

The Indicators Of An Effective Public Participation Process: A well-informed public has the best chance to contribute meaningful input into transportation decisions, through a broad array of involvement opportunities at all stages of decisionmaking. Six useful elements in planning for effective public involvement are:

1. Clearly defined purpose and objectives for initiating a public dialogue on transportation issues;
2. Specific identification of who are the affected public and other stakeholder groups with respect to the plans and programs under development;
3. Identification of techniques for engaging the public in the process;
4. Notification procedures that effectively target affected groups;
5. Education and assistance techniques, which result in an accurate and full public understanding of transportation issues; and
6. Follow through by the MPO demonstrating that decisionmakers seriously considered public input.

Who Is Involved In Transportation Planning? The transportation planning process is a collaborative process, involving a variety of decisionmakers and stakeholders. Planners work with the public to recommend the alternatives that make the most sense for their areas. The alternatives selected by decision maker's drive the projects that are ultimately constructed. For urban areas, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) have lead responsibility for the transportation planning process in cooperation with State Departments of Transportation and transit agencies. For nonurban areas and for transportation planning between urban areas, the State assumes the primary role for the process. The Federal Government, FHWA and FTA, provides funding for transportation planning and projects. It also oversees the transportation planning and project activities of States, transit agencies, and MPOs.

How Can You Get Involved? The US Department of Transportation, as well as State and local governments and MPOs, believe that you, the public, are essential to the transportation planning process. You can play a great role in influencing the transportation decisions that are made for your communities, which help shape your quality of life. We encourage participation and involvement, and we believe that the earlier you get involved in the process, the greater the impact you will have.

Ways to Get Involved:

- Put your name on a mailing list to receive newsletters, updates, and other information.
- Attend meetings of local transportation boards.
- Provide input on transportation plans.
- Volunteer to serve on a citizens focus group or citizens advisory committee
- Ask a transportation official to attend your civic association and speak about transportation in your community.
- Contact your State Department of Transportation, MPO, local government, or transit agency for additional information. The best place to start is their public information or community relations department.
- Visit Websites: Most State Departments of Transportation, MPOs, local governments, transit agencies, and the Federal Government can be accessed through the Internet.

For more information

Planning: FHWA: www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/index.htm
FTA: www.fta.dot.gov/grant_programs

USDOT Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program: www.planning.dot.gov

Public Involvement: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/pubinv2.htm